



blm - alaska

frontiers

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Feds pool hotshot crews to crush fires

A new interagency agreement between the BLM Alaska Fire Service and the U.S. Forest Service sets up joint operation of "hotshot," suppression crews. It will save money and enable the agencies to make more efficient use of these highly trained firefighters.

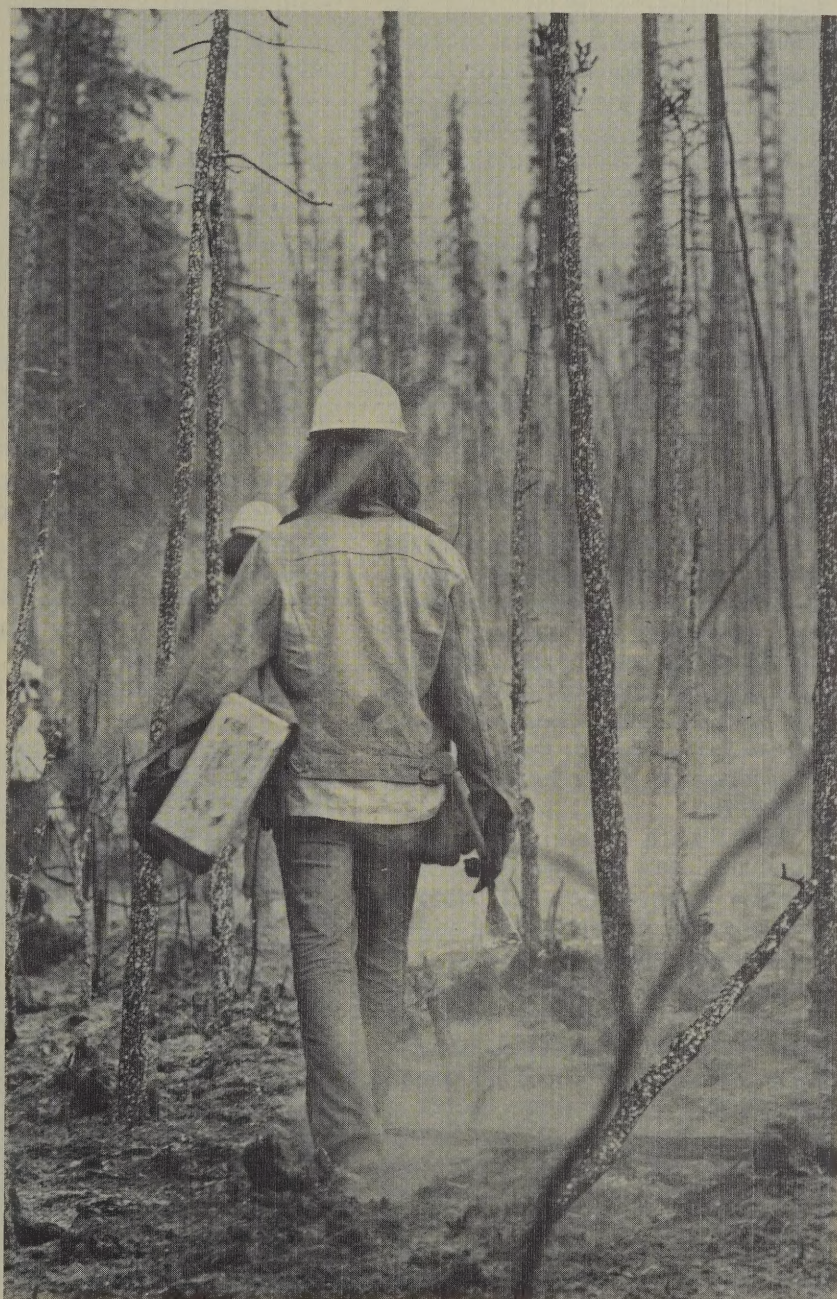
Hotshot crews are composed of 20 firefighters, specially trained to get to a fire quickly and fight it with minimal equipment. The U.S. Forest Service maintains hotshot crews in the Lower 48, and the Alaska Fire Service employs two crews. In Alaska the fire season is most active in the early part of the summer. By mid-July there is usually more rain and the fires die down. At the same time, spring moisture has dried in the western states, so their worst fires occur after mid-July.

The new agreement takes advantage of this normal sequence of events. On June 8, the Forest Service Region 5 will send one of its hotshot crews to Alaska to be stationed in Fairbanks until about July 15. Then the Forest Service crew will go south again and be joined by one of the two Alaska crews. The Alaska crew will fight fires in the Lower 48 until about Sept. 1. The dates are subject to fire activity and can be changed by mutual agreement of the two agencies.

The supplying agency will provide basic gear for the crew and pay for the first eight hours of the firefighters' time each work day. Overtime will be charged to the fire they are fighting.

This new agreement will enable the crews to work throughout the summer, and each agency will have more crews available on short notice than before. Both agencies will save money and be able to suppress fires better and faster.

—SS



Trained to get there fast, hotshot crews dig firelines. Here, a hotshot carries C rations after a hectic shift.

Trial stakes become landmarks in arctic

BLM is now testing the feasibility of marking public easements in the far north of Alaska. During the summer of 1986 two members of the BLM Arctic District staff checked the condition of experimental markers they had placed on 88 miles of trails in the Barrow area the year before. They were anxious to see how the fiberglass markers were holding up in the permafrost soils and arctic winter weather.

The experimental stakes mark four trails leading from Barrow to public land in the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska. One trail leads to the village of Atkasuk, 58 miles southwest of Barrow, and one leads to the village of Wainwright, south of Barrow on the coastline. All four trails provide access to public lands managed by BLM.

When the specialists flew over the marked easements again last August, they found the experimental stakes were doing well after the winter. The stakes will be monitored until staff members can estimate how long they will hold up before they need to be repaired or replaced; then a regular maintenance schedule will be established.

The trails are "interim" easements, tentatively set until it is decided whether or not they will become permanent. If the routes are changed, the markers will be removed.

Easements are access routes across private lands. They enable the public to reach federal and state lands, and they are becoming increasingly important transportation routes in northern Alaska, as BLM conveys more and more land into private and state ownership. Site easements are also identified along many of the routes to provide areas for short-term parking or camping for a limited time.

Establishing the location of the easements was a joint effort between BLM, the North Slope Borough and

the local village corporation. BLM resource specialist Gerard Nordmann has been leading the Arctic District office's easement efforts.

"Our staff sat down with lands specialists from the Ukpeagvik Inupiat Corporation, the village corporation that services the area, and determined the locations of the easements that would be marked," Nordmann said. North Slope Borough officials joined the planning later in the process.

Using old BLM conveyance documents and knowledge of today's traffic patterns, the group identified trails that were a composite of old and modern routes. By making adjustments based on today's traffic and use patterns," Nordmann added, "we tried to streamline the trail system to meet the needs of the local residents as well as the general public." He expects that the easements as they are now staked will have minor revisions as land status changes and environmental concerns are identified.

For this area, where easements are used primarily in the winter when the ground is frozen, the group agreed to mark the easements with six-foot, bright yellow fiberglass stakes. The four-foot portion showing above ground displays a highly reflective strip and a logo identifying BLM, with the Arctic district office address.

These high-visibility stakes were designed expressly for the flat, treeless terrain and snowy conditions.

The stakes are placed a maximum of 1/4 mile apart, or within sight of each other, and provide excellent guides.

Local residents are using the easements for traveling between the villages and Barrow for both subsistence hunting and fishing and for commercial purposes.

Nordmann, assisted by BLM resource specialist Elliott Lowe, used Barrow as the base for the actual staking operation. Each day they flew to the easements by helicopter. They started at the farthest point of each trail and worked back to Barrow, avoiding sensitive areas such as archaeological sites and sharp inclines.

In all, they spent 10 days driving stakes with a 65-pound rock pilot point, which "basically beat a hole through the ice." Contending with many cold tundra ponds and a lot of permafrost while staking, they were able to stake between eight and nine miles each day.

"Because these experimental stakes are fiberglass and very lightweight, we were able to take enough with us in the helicopter to avoid running out during the day. If we had been using heavier stakes, we would have had to make more trips due to weight limitations in the helicopter," Nordmann said. The crew spent 14 days in Barrow, and was only grounded by weather for two of those days.

Nordmann and Lowe had plenty of company from the local caribou



Both travelers and landowners like BLM's yellow easement stakes. They mark the corridors reserved for public use.

while they were staking the easements. "Sometimes we were working virtually in the middle of the herds, and they didn't seem to care at all," Nordmann said.

The signed easements bring several benefits to the local people. "One benefit is the safety factor for the people of the Barrow area during their winter travels," Nordmann added.

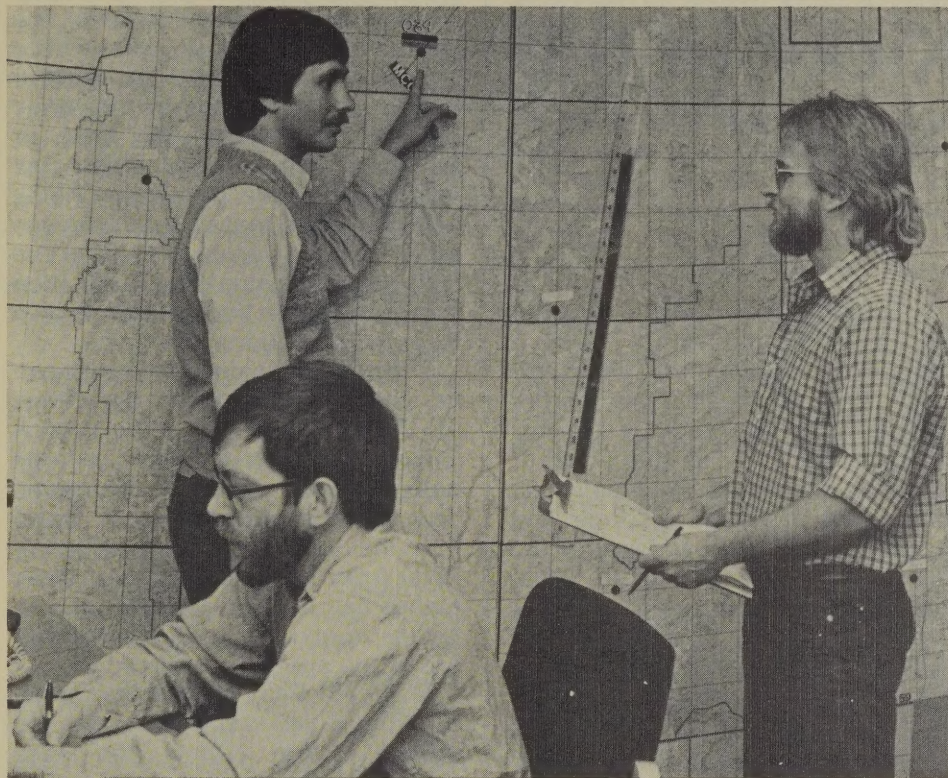
Easements also control access and limit unauthorized use of Native lands. They provide a transportation link for the people, reduce the problems of damage to the lands caused by inappropriate use (a constant concern to all land managers), and establish transportation routes for present and future commercial use. During this past summer's trip to Barrow, Nordmann and Lowe again met with Ukpeagvik Inupiat Corporation and North Slope Borough representatives and established actual entrances and exits to Barrow on the map. They also identified minor revisions that will be staked during the summer of 1987.

"Our next immediate need is to coordinate with the Arctic Slope Regional Corporation concerning easements across their lands," Nordmann said. "We will be working toward a final resolution on alignments of the easements in the North Slope area."

Informing and educating the public about the location and use of easements is a future goal for the BLM. "It is important that travelers know that access has been provided to allow them to reach public lands," said Nordmann, who hopes to produce a trails inventory and map for his district in the future. An interagency task force is presently working on an information plan and mapping requirements that can be produced once easements are correctly located on the ground and legally identified in the land records.

—SDW

New fire center speeds attack



State and federal employees plan where to send fire fighters.

Fighting wildfires in Alaska costs millions of dollars annually. It also requires a large logistics organization to move people and equipment to remote sites on short notice. Streamlining firefighting operations is the goal of the new Alaska Interagency Fire Coordination Center. Starting this summer, the BLM Alaska Fire Service, the Alaska Division of Forestry and the U.S. Forest Service will coordinate their efforts to provide more efficient movement of firefighters and supplies.

The Alaska Fire Service is responsible for fighting wildfires in the northern part of Alaska on land managed by federal agencies, Native corporations and the state of Alaska. The state of Alaska is responsible for firefighting on all lands in the southern part of the state. The U.S. Forest Service handles fires only in the National Forests. In the past, all three agencies have coordinated their own resources separately.

Under the new agreement, the state of Alaska will station two employees at the coordination center

on Fort Wainwright in Fairbanks for the fire season. A Forest Service employee will also come to the coordination center during periods of fire activity. The area responsibilities will remain the same and each agency will use its own resources before calling on another agency. Coordination of tactical resources such as retardant aircraft, air attack forces and smokejumpers will be handled by the fire coordination center. This will assure that all resources in the state are exhausted before support is requested from the Lower 48.

Scott Wolf, logistics officer for the state of Alaska, was involved in planning for the new agreement. "Saving money wasn't the only issue," he said. "The real savings is going to come in protection of the lands. We will be able to suppress fires faster and more efficiently." A report generated each morning will combine BLM and state of Alaska fire information statewide. Based on this complete picture, fire managers will be able to decide where to put their resources.

—SS

Get your Kicks in the "Kigs"

A little-known mountain range in the BLM Kobuk District holds a treasure of recreational opportunities. The Kigluaik Mountains (pronounced Kig-lee-uk or Kig-loo-ak) lie about 30 miles due north of Nome on the Seward Peninsula, 100 miles south of the Arctic Circle. The range runs east-west and is about 50 miles long and 30 miles wide. Kigluaik is an Eskimo word meaning "rough country," or "hard to penetrate," and these are some of the steepest mountains in Alaska. Most of the range is under BLM management. "It is a high-value recreation area that is undiscovered for the most part," said Roger Bolstad, BLM Kobuk district manager. "There are fishing, hunting and hiking opportunities available, all with road access from two sides of the range."

Getting there

Bordered on the east by the Salmon Lake road and on the west by the road from Nome to Teller, the Kigluaiks are very accessible compared to the rest of western Alaska. All four sides of the range can be reached by car, boat, or floatplane. Commercial flights will take you to Nome, population 3,000, where you can rent a car and drive to either the east or west ends of the range. You can also drive north, then hike to the south flank of the range in three to four hours.

The northern side of the range can be reached by boat from the village of Teller, then up the Tuksuk Channel to Imuruk Basin, a large body of water north of the range. You can also reach Imuruk Basin from the east by floating the Kuzitrin River from Salmon Lake Road. Float planes can land on Glacial Lake. In winter, hunters and reindeer herders get to the area by snowmachine.

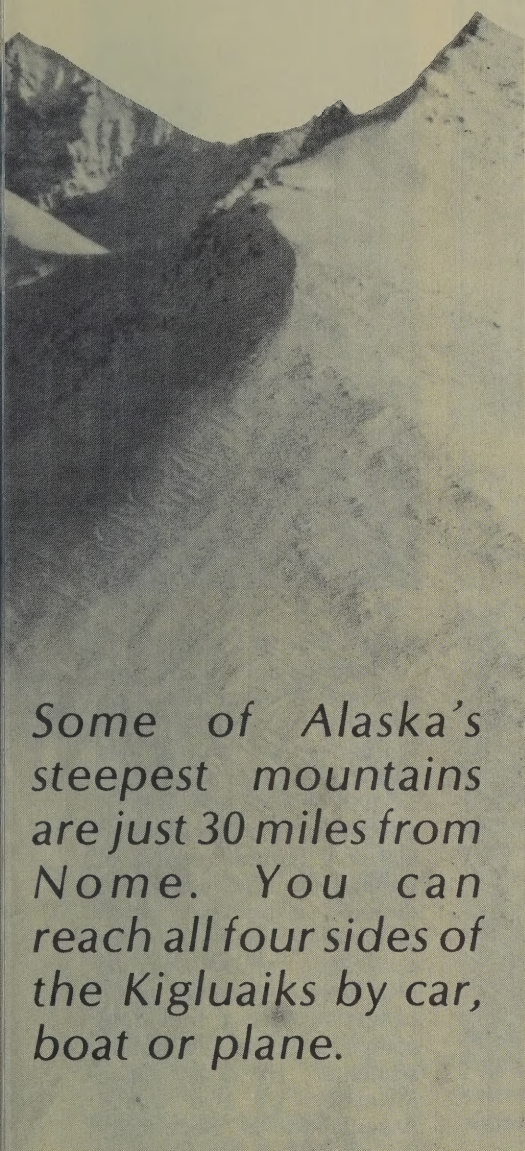
Mosquito Pass divides the range, running north-south through the middle. From Nome, the pass provides access for small planes and helicopters to the center of the range as well as to the country north of the range. In the winter, small aircraft can land in the Kigluaiks on some valley floors, on Glacial Lake or on Imuruk Basin.



Recreation

Because the mountains are so accessible, they provide a wealth of opportunities for recreation. Little research has been done yet about fishing in the area, but red salmon run up the Sinuk River and into Glacial Lake. This is one of the farthest north runs of these salmon in the world. There are grayling, char, burbot, cisco and salmon in Glacial Lake.

Although there are no established trails, the low-growing vegetation makes walking easy. Hikers can walk up the valleys to the glacial lakes, although most of the valleys end in abrupt cliffs.



Some of Alaska's steepest mountains are just 30 miles from Nome. You can reach all four sides of the Kigluaiks by car, boat or plane.

The ridgetops provide easy walking and spectacular views. Since the mountains are completely treeless, a hiker can see for great distances. Sheer dropoffs, mountain vistas, deep turquoise lakes and U-shaped glacial valleys await the visitor. In late August the tundra plants turn bright red and yellow and their reflections are bright in the glass-still lakes. Snow buntings, ptarmigan, gyrfalcons, golden eagles, marmots, ground squirrels, grizzly bears, moose and reindeer can all be seen in these mountains.

Geology

The geology contributes to the drama of the Kigluaik Mountains, which were created by the meeting of two tectonic plates about 700 million years ago. When the plates collided, the land was thrust up, forming mountains that in places look like a giant's stairsteps. Miners at the turn of the century knew this range as the Sawtooth Mountains.

The northern escarpments of the mountains are the steepest and most spectacular. BLM's representative at the Nome Field Office, Fred Payton, knows the area well and has coined the name "China Wall" for one particularly steep valley wall. "The first time I saw it, the thing that came to my mind was the wall in China," says Payton. "It's a sheer, perpendicular rock face."

The Kigluaik Fault, a fracture in the earth's crust, runs near Windy Cove on the north side of the mountains. On one side of the fault the earth's crust was thrust up, on the other side it dropped down. As a result, on the higher side a fault-line cliff rises about 2,700 feet from the base of the range to the crest of the mountains. The lower side of the fault forms Imuruk Basin, a tidewater body which runs unusually far inland.

Old mining relics

Glacially formed Crater Lake is a deep, still pool surrounded by steep hills. This lake is the starting place of the Wild Goose Pipeline, which carried water to early mining operations near the Nome River, 10 to 12 miles away. Built around 1920, the 21-inch pipe was made of tongue-and-groove redwood slats held together with iron hoops. The wood has not deteriorated, and the pipe is still intact in some places. Its name comes from the 5-mile-long Wild Goose Railroad which carried supplies north from Nome to early mining camps near Shelton. Remnants of old cabins, possibly built to help maintain the pipeline, still exist.

Special areas

Two areas within the range are proposed for research natural areas. When an area is designated as a research natural area (RNA), it is reserved for research and study of its unique features. Disturbances such as mining are not permitted, but recreational use is allowed. One proposed Research Natural Area contains the summit of Mount Osborn and Grand Central Valley. Mount Osborn, 4,714 feet, is the highest point in the range, and is the site of a small glacier and some little-known and possibly uncommon plants. Perennial snowfields here provide habitat for snow buntings.

The second proposed research natural area is Windy Cove, off the Imuruk Basin. Its special feature is the Kigluaik Fault. Also, the coastal scrub brush in this locality provides favorable nesting habitat for several species of Eurasian birds found only rarely in North America. Fred Payton says that the mountains "can provide unique hiking and wilderness experiences."

Camping

There is one shelter cabin in the area, built by the city of Nome in conjunction with the State of Alaska. BLM maintains a campground on Salmon Lake, 40 miles from Nome.

This little-known, spectacular country is both remote and accessible. As Payton says, "The grandeur of the 'Kigs' beckons the photographer, the hiker, the backpacker — anyone seeking adventure."

—SS



Hiking is easy in the Kigs.

Let the advisory council speak your mind on BLM plans

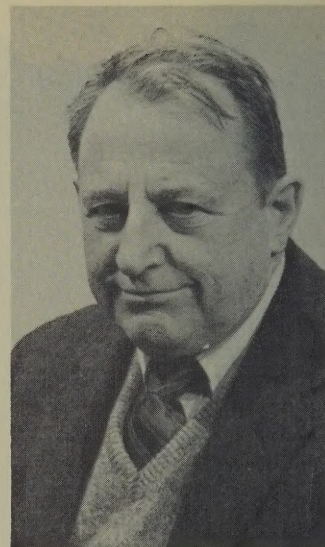
Have you ever wished you could express your point of view when government officials are making decisions? If so, you should know about BLM's citizen advisory councils.

District advisory councils have four major tasks: represent the public in BLM programs, advise district managers and staff, review and monitor BLM functions, and promote public education. The councils act as sounding boards for public concerns about policies and procedures. They cannot direct BLM to take any particular action, but their resolutions influence BLM's decisions. Each member represents a particular interest and voices those concerns. The Northern Alaska Advisory Council works with the Arctic, Kobuk and Steese/White Mountains districts, and the Southern Alaska Advisory Council covers the Anchorage and Glennallen districts. They meet several times a year in locations throughout the state. At least one hour of each general meeting is set aside for public comment on agenda items.

Members of the **Northern Alaska Council** are pictured here. If you ever want to ask a question or share an idea, you can contact them by phoning (907) 356-2345 or writing BLM Public Affairs Office, 1541 Gaffney Road, Fairbanks, Alaska 99703.

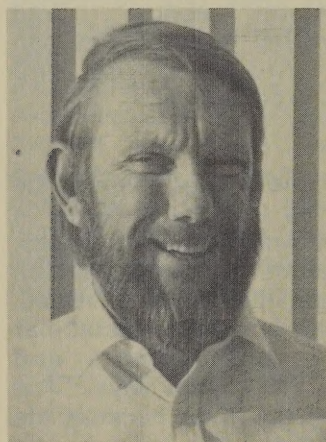
(Southern Advisory Council members will be profiled in a later issue—Editor)

—SDW



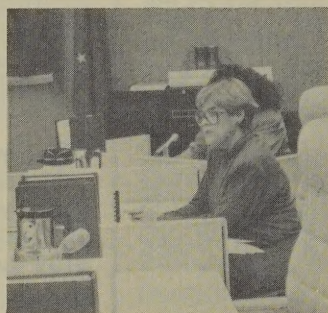
Robert Murray - Wildlife

Presently employed as the principal of Anderson High School, 50 miles from Fairbanks, Mr. Murray has had 40 years of experience in wildlife, forestry and outdoor education. He managed an 800-acre natural reserve in Indiana for nine years and directed a summer youth camp emphasizing outdoor education. Mr. Murray has also directed summer youth camps in Alaska, including camps for special education students. He is an active member of the state Association for Secondary Principals the Alaska State Athletic Association and Trout, Unlimited. He has lived in Interior Alaska since 1969 and served on the Northern Alaska Advisory Council for more than four years.



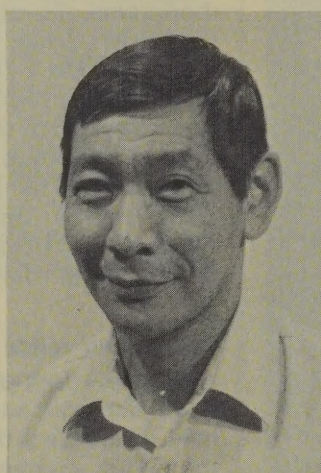
Alan Jubenville - Public-at-Large

Associate professor of resource management at the University of Alaska-Fairbanks since 1979. Dr. Jubenville holds a bachelor's degree in forest management, a master's in forest ecology and a Ph.D. in wildland recreation. An avid outdoors person who enjoys hunting, fishing trapping, river floating and backpacking, he has written two books on outdoor recreation planning and management. During a recent six-month sabbatical at the University of Montana in Missoula, Dr. Jubenville completed work on a new textbook on recreation management.



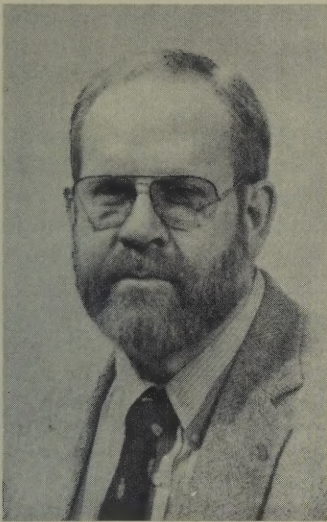
Janet Halvarson - Elected General Purpose Government

An active resident of Fairbanks for the past 30 years, Mrs. Halvarson is currently serving on the Fairbanks City Council. She is the executive director of the Fairbanks Convention and Visitors Bureau. She also serves on a task force evaluating impacts on the community and Interior Alaska from the arrival of the U.S. Army Light Infantry Division. Mrs. Halvarson co-authored an interpretive article entitled, "What you can do in the parks," published in the Alaska Public Affairs Journal. She has been camp director for the Campfire program and the Fairbanks North Star Borough Parks and Recreation and has served on the boards of several community organizations.



Richard Atuk - Renewable Resources

A life-long resident of Alaska, Mr. Atuk earned his geological engineering degree from the University of Alaska-Fairbanks. He has served as vice-president of Bering Straits Regional Corporation, been a member of the advisory committee to the Federal/State Land Use Planning Commission, and is familiar with the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act and various mineral exploration and development agreements. Mr. Atuk is currently serving as a natural resources officer in the Alaska Department of Community and Regional Affairs-Anchorage.

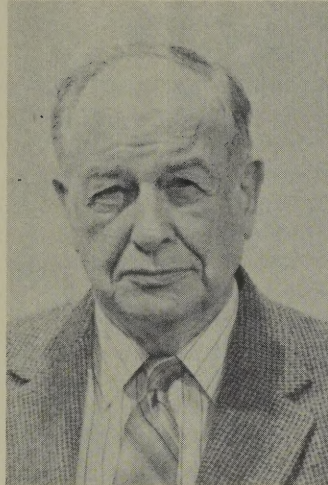


Alan C. Epps - Environmental Protection

Professor of natural resources at the University of Alaska-Fairbanks for the past 17 years, Mr. Epps holds a bachelor's degree in agriculture production and a master's in horticulture. He has authored several publications on agriculture, horticulture, Alaskan land management and the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act. Mr. Epps has been an effective liaison between the public and planners during various federal, state and university land-use planning projects.

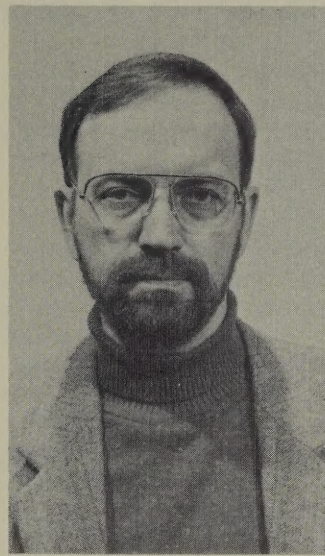
In 1978 Mr. Epps received the Department of Agriculture's Award for Superior Service for his objective analysis and interpretation of proposals for the classification and use of federal lands in Alaska.

Recognized as an authority on natural resources evaluation, planning and education, Epps was appointed by the Secretary of the Interior to fill a one-year term on the BLM National Advisory Council in 1987.



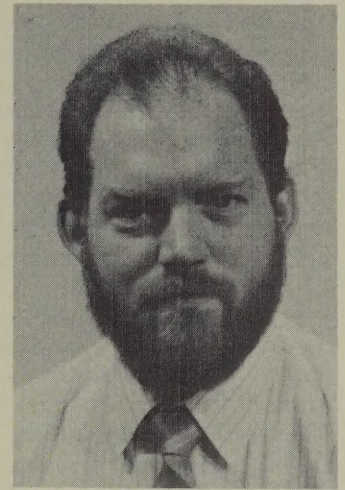
Woodrow Johansen - Transportation/Right-of-Way

Born in Cordova, Alaska, Mr. Johansen graduated from the University of Alaska-Fairbanks with a five-year degree in civil engineering in 1940. Presently retired, he spent 40 years in the field of Alaskan transportation development and operation. He was a professor and department head at UA-F for 10 years, teaching transportation engineering and related subjects. Johansen is currently a member of the American Society of Professional Engineers, American Society of Civil Engineers and Pioneers of Alaska.



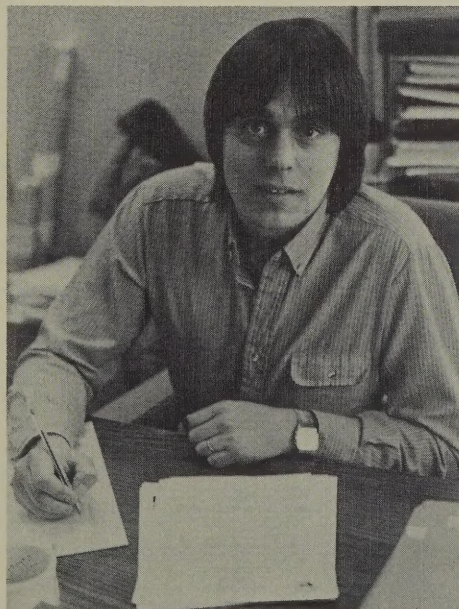
Tom Albert - Public-at-Large

Active in arctic science since 1975, Dr. Albert has served as senior scientist to the North Slope Borough's Department of Conservation and Environmental Protection since 1981. He holds a bachelor's degree in pre-veterinarian studies, a doctorate of veterinary medicine (VMD) and a Ph.D. in biology. After teaching at the University of Maryland for 14 years, Dr. Albert came to Alaska as a visiting scientist in residence at the Naval Arctic Research Laboratory in Barrow. As a representative of the Borough, Dr. Albert has traveled to England and Canada for conferences of international significance.



Rick Schikora - Recreation

Born in Fairbanks, Mr. Schikora is a pilot and an avid hunter and fisherman who spends his free time investigating the recreational opportunities in Interior Alaska. He is currently the secretary/treasurer of the Greater Fairbanks Chamber of Commerce and has served on its transportation committee for the past three years. He has been a certified public accountant since 1979 and is a partner of the general accounting firm of Warwick and Schikora in Fairbanks. A strong advocate of developing and expanding recreational programs, he is currently active in the Civil Air Patrol and the North Star Flying Lions.



Gary Lee - Public-at-Large

A life-long resident of Alaska, Mr. Lee has been a land specialist with Doyon, Limited for the past seven years. He also served three years as a land technician with Interior Village Association. A former member of the Fairbanks District Advisory Council (1980-81), he is president of Menda Cha-ag Native Corporation of Healy Lake, Alaska, and is a newly-appointed member of the Iditarod National Historic Trail Advisory Council.

The influential **National Public Lands Advisory Council** will visit Alaska in June to get a first-hand view of BLM programs and issues in Alaska. The 21-member council advises the Secretary of the Interior through BLM Director Robert Burford about national policies and programs for managing the public lands.

The group, which is expected to include BLM Director Burford, will make a field tour of key areas including the Utility Corridor (Trans-Alaska Pipeline corridor), Prudhoe Bay, the Red Dog Mine, and ANWR. Paula Easeley of Anchorage and Alan C. Epps of Fairbanks serve on this advisory group.

BLM recently took over the management and operation of the **Alaska Resources Library** in Anchorage. Formerly administered by the Library of the Secretary of the Interior, it is considered to be the leading natural resource library in the state. It serves all the federal agencies, as well as Native corporations, state agencies, and the public.

Alaska BLM has just published a **guidebook** on the restoration, rehabilitation and prevention of undue degradation to the land surface.

The guidebook brings together current knowledge about **technology and methods for mitigating surface disturbance and reclaiming disturbed areas**. This first version of the guide will be updated as new information is developed.

Although it is mainly intended for BLM personnel, the guide may be useful to people who use the public land for such things as pipelines, power transmission lines, mining operations, recreation development, timber operations, etc.

The **University of Alaska** has signed an agreement to do archeological field work for BLM's Arctic District, beginning with a project along the Utility Corridor. This summer a university graduate student will begin excavating a site about 30 miles south of Coldfoot. BLM, which needs the information for its Utility Corridor Resource Management Plan, will help this student and others in their research projects by providing logistical support and the advice of experienced staff archeologists.

In a move that will save money and aid the spread of knowledge, BLM has begun entering all cadastral survey maps in the **Computerized Map Cataloguing Information Retrieval System**. This is a catalogue of existing maps. It lists the area shown in a map, where the map is located, who made it, and the kind of information it shows. The state of Alaska is also participating in the cataloguing system, which will allow state and federal agencies to share products and information and will avoid the duplication of maps that already exist. Land status maps, maps showing fire fuels, vegetation and other resources, orthophoto maps and photo-index maps are all being entered and accessed by the system. This is not a sales catalogue, but is used as an inventory tool.

The **draft EIS** is expected to be published in May for the proposed **Trans-Alaska Gas System pipeline** from Prudhoe Bay to Port Valdez. A public hearing will be held in June as part of the public review and comment process.



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